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Farm Broadcasters Letter



Letter No. 2227

COMMUNICATIONS

August 29, 1985

FARMLAND VALUES - 1984

The sharp drop in farmland values in 1984 reduced the value of farm assets by 13 pct. Farm operators' equity in those assets declined by 11 pct., according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This aggravated the financial problems of heavily indebted farmers. The debt-to-asset ratio of all farmers increased to 23.2 pct. compared with 21.2 pct. in 1980. An early 1985 survey estimated that 370,000 farms, of 1.7 million farms covered in the survey, carried a debt-to-asset ratio of 40 pct. or more.

FARMER EXCHANGE

U.S. Sec'y of Agriculture John Block and Valentin Mesyats, Soviet Minister of Agriculture, agreed to resume the exchange of young agricultural specialists between the two countries. Sec'y Block described the program as a unique opportunity to build good will between the peoples of the U.S. and USSR. The program will begin in the summer of 1986.

FARM EXPORTS TO SOUTH ASIA

U.S. farm exports to South Asia are projected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to rise about 19 pct. to \$760 million in fiscal 1986, with large concessional wheat sales to Pakistan likely to account for most of the increase. No growth is forecast in U.S. wheat sales to other South Asian countries. India's huge wheat surplus will probably preclude wheat imports for at least 2 to 3 years. U.S. exports to South Asia have fallen 25 pct. to about \$641 million in fiscal 1985. Wheat sales are off nearly 20 pct., and soybean oil marketings down more than 25 pct. (For more info, call Maurice Landes at 202-786-1614.)

LAND SWAP COMMENTS

The U.S. Department of Interior and the U.S. Department of Agriculture have completed analysis of about 2,350 public comments received on the agencies' proposal to interchange certain lands and minerals responsibilities. Work is now underway to develop a legislative proposal for presentation to Congress. Many people agreed with the goals, but objected to a particular portion, often on a local basis. All these objections are being carefully evaluated. (Copies of the public comment analysis are available from Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service national, state and regional offices.)

A NEW TRADE ROUND?

As the U.S. faces record-breaking trade deficits in 1985, awareness of the critical impact of foreign trade on the U.S. economy continues to grow. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. views a new trade round as a prerequisite for rolling back restrictive measures that have distorted international trade in recent years.

CANADA AIDS ITS FARMERS

Canada announced a \$C48 million (Canadian dollars) program on Aug. 14 to aid western livestock producer seriously affected by drought and grasshopper damage, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Under the Livestock Drought Assistance Program, the Canadian Government will provide up to \$C30 per breeding cow to help pay for the purchase and transportation of feed to drought-stricken areas. Support will also be available to other classes of livestock such as sheep and goats.

CROP IN POLAND

Poland's 1985/86 total grain crop is estimated at 23.9 million tons, 2 pct. below last year's record crop of 24.4 million, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Wheat production is estimated at a record 6.5 million tons, 8 pct. above last year's crop. Total coarse grain production is estimated at 17.4 million, 6 pct. below the 1984/85 harvest. About 50 pct. of the grain crop was harvested as of August 20.

1984 FARM INCOME

Despite a rise in U.S. farm income, a sharp drop in the value of farmers' assets contributed to continued financial difficulties, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In 1984, crop output increased more than 25 pct. because of more acres planted and generally favorable weather. The larger 1984 production resulted in a 17 pct. increase in farm productivity from 1983. Net cash income increased 2 pct. to \$39.1 billion. However, taking inflation into account, net cash income declined.

CATTLE ON FEED

Cattle and calves on feed Aug. 1 for slaughter market in the 7 States preparing monthly estimates totaled 6.39 million head, down 6 pct. from a year ago and 7 pct. below Aug. 1, 1983, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Placements of cattle and calves on feed in the 7 States during July totaled 1.07 million, down 19 pct. from last year and 9 pct. below July 1983. (For more statistical info, call 202-447-6880.)

LIVESTOCK SLAUGHTER

Commercial red meat production for the U.S. in July 1985 totaled 3 billion, 28 million pounds, up 8 pct. from July 1984, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This is the record high July red meat production level. The previous July record high totaled 3 billion, 7 million pounds in 1980. Beef production for July 1985 was just over 2 billion pounds, up 6 pct. from 1984. Cattle kill totaled 3.14 million head. Pork production for July 1985 totaled 1 billion, 15 million pounds, up 10 pct. Hog kill totaled 6.6 million head.

USDA DOGS EARN THEIR KEEP

Under a nationwide program begun in 1984, U.S. Department of Agriculture inspectors at major U.S. airports fine international travelers from \$25 to \$50 on the spot if they fail to declare or deliberately conceal foreign food, plants or plant and animal products. The fines imposed now total well over a half-million dollars. Helping to find the prohibited products are four friendly little beagles, wearing green uniforms with the letters: USDA. Travelers can obtain a free pamphlet listing restrictions on foreign agricultural products by writing: Travelers' Tips, APHIS, USDA, Room 700 Federal Bldg., Hyattsville, MD 20782.

FROM OUR
TELEVISION
SERVICE

WORLD PRODUCTION AND TRADE...USDA analyst Dewain Rahe examines reasons for the decline of value in U.S. agricultural exports and what the future holds for improving imports. Vic Powell interviews. (456)

U.S. EXPORT OUTLOOK...USDA economist Steve MacDonald offers the latest forecast for export value in fiscal year 1985 and factors contributing to their decline. Vic Powell interviews. (457)

U.S. EXPORT OUTLOOK - II...USDA economist Steve MacDonald continues his discussion on the value of exports for 1985. Vic Powell interviews. (458)

COTTON AND WOOL OUTLOOK...USDA economist Terry Townsend talks about the current forecast for U.S. cotton and wool and what it means for U.S. farmers. Jim Johnson interviews. (459)

FARM MANAGEMENT PRACTICES...Bill Field, extension agricultural engineer from Purdue University, focuses on the relationship between stress and farm accidents; and the importance of teaching children about farm safety. Vic Powell introduces. (460)

COTTON
USE DOWN

Total U.S. cotton use is forecast at 9.2 million bales, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This is the lowest since 1896. Production is expected to reach 13.8 million bales, 6 pct. above 1984. Consequently, U.S. ending stocks could rise to nearly 9 million bales in 1985/86, more than double the year-earlier level. U.S. cotton exports reached 6.25 million bales in 1984/85, but are estimated to fall precipitously to 4 million during 1985/86. U.S. mill use is forecast to drop to 5.2 million bales from 5.4 million in 1984. Based on provisions in the 1985 Farm Bill tentatively approved by the House Ag Committee in late July, upland cotton loan rates on the 1986/87 crop could fall between 5 and 25 percent.

SULFA RESIDUE
IN SWINE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is extending for 60 days the public comment period on its notice of intent to propose a program to control sulfa residues in swine. The original notice was published May 20. The 60-day extension is in the Aug. 29 Federal Register. Submit comments until Oct. 29 to: Food Safety and Inspection Service, Hearing Clerk, Room 3803 S. Ag. Bldg., USDA, Wash., D.C. 20250. Submit comments in duplicate.

THE ANTS
ARE COMING!

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is expanding areas in South Carolina and Texas under regulation to prevent the spread of imported fire ants. Imported fire ant regulations restrict the movement of specified articles from all or part of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and Puerto Rico.

VESICULAR
STOMATITIS

A viral disease, named vesicular stomatitis, has been discovered on 59 premises in Colorado, 58 in New Mexico and two in Arizona since June 1, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The primary concern of the USDA is that vesicular stomatitis not be confused with foot-and-mouth disease since both have similar clinical symptoms. Foot-and-mouth disease is currently not known to exist in the United States.

OFF MIKE

Larry Steckline (Mid-America Ag Net, Wichita, KS) and Bob Ratliff (Progressive Farmer Net, Starkville, MS) are traveling with Sec'y of Agric John Block in the Soviet Union and Hungary and may well be back by the time you read this. Our thanks to Larry for letting us tap his material for USDA Radio News Line stories. To get the material, Gary Crawford of our staff worked with Mid-America Ag Net's Tony Purcell (Yes, Tony is back with Larry's operation after a stint with the Colorado Wheat Growers) ... A couple weeks ago we were agonizing over the spelling of "cabritto" (goat meat) as in the World Championship Cabritto Cookoff Contest that Roddy Peeples (VSA, San Angelo, TX) and Jim Stewart (KFYO, Lubbock, TX) will judge Labor Day (or more likely, already have judged by the time you read this). We hedged our bet earlier by spelling it with 2 "b's" one time and only one the next. Now, thanks to Layne Beaty (former chief, USDA Radio/TV, now retired), we know the one-"B" spelling is correct. Layne got curious and checked a Spanish dictionary and found the word. Thanks, Layne ... Radonna Long (KGNC, Amarillo, TX) returned from her tour with 45 people to Calgary, Canada, in July somewhat amazed that she ended up "leading" the group at all. Seems the airlines overbooked the flight and only because a couple sitting in first class gave up their seats did Radonna get on the plane. There are nice people out there, folks! ... Speaking of tours, we hear that Bob Bosold (WAXX, Eau Claire, WI) is making final plans for a farm tour to Europe this September ... Doug Thomas (Southern States Net, Baton Rouge, LA) was on a three-member panel at the recent annual meeting and workshop of the Southern Association of Information Officers of State Departments of Agriculture (whew, what a title) and reported the results of a survey he had taken showed farmers wanted marketing information most of all and that they want it between 5:30 and 6:00 a.m. and during the noon hour. (Not too surprising a finding, really.)

FROM OUR RADIO
SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1474...A lake in northwestern Tennessee steeped in Indian legend is now the center of a fight to save it from extinction. Brenda Curtis-Heiken talks to the people involved in this controversy.

AGRITAPE/FARM PROGRAM REPORT #1463...USDA radio news highlights; USDA issues preliminary loan rates for soybeans; Preserver for apples faces ban; Farm numbers declining; Trouble for farm lenders; Changes in Federal Crop Insurance program.

CONSUMER TIME #956...Sexual abuse statistics; Do you deserve a break today; Listen to the heartbeat; Living with the threat of fires; Exercise and weight control.

USDA RADIO NEWS SERVICE...Tues, Sept. 3, Weekly crop and weather; Tues, Sept. 10, Weekly crop and weather, Vegetables; Wed, Sept. 11, U.S. crop production, World agriculture supply and demand; Fri, Sept. 13, Milk production. Dial the USDA National News Line 202-488-8358 or 8359. All material changed at 5 p.m. EDT each working day.


JAMES L. JOHNSON, Chief
Radio-Television Division